

SATURDAY, SEPT. 14, 1872.

Subject: The Significance and Effect of Christ's  
Birth.

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# PLYMOUTH PULPIT:

A Weekly Publication

OF

## SERMONS

PREACHED BY

### HENRY WARD BEECHER.



New-York:

J. B. FORD & CO., No. 27 PARK PLACE.

1872.

AMERICAN NEWS COMPANY, AGENTS FOR THE TRADE.

European Agents, SAMPSON LOW, SON, & MARSTON, Crown Buildings, 188 Fleet Street, London.

Sold by all Carriers and News Dealers.

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Brooklyn, January, 1869.

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# THE SIGNIFICANCE AND EFFECT OF CHRIST'S BIRTH.

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"For unto you is born, this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."—LUKE II:11.

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The thought of the birth of the Saviour into the world is spiritualized by the apostle. *Christ formed in you the hope of glory* was a favorite style of thought with him. It is, as it were, a mystic allusion to the peculiar birth of our Saviour out of the ordinary course of human affairs. The unfolding of Christ in the New Testament history, is worthy of our thought, if for no other reason, for the parallelism which it gives to the experience which men have in Christ Jesus as a personal Saviour. The historical development answers, in a greater or less degree, to that which takes place personally in those who come to have a saving and rejoicing knowledge of Christ.

First in the order of events, but recounted by only one of the Evangelists—Luke—is this beautiful scene. I know it has given rise to much critical speculation, and to much skeptical remark; but it seems to me as though without this peculiar history by Luke, all the overture, all the music, in the life of Christ, would be taken out of the way. Nothing more ethereal, nothing purer, nothing more beautiful, can be conceived of than this whole angelic appearance and annunciation. Yet it was made to rude shepherds. It was made to the few and not to the many. It seems as though it was an overflow of heavenly joy meant for their own enjoying, rather than as a composite message sent by the hands of many angels to the earth. The shepherds heard what was going on above. It was going on there for higher spectators, and for souls rejoicing among the blessed; but, as it were, it broke forth, and some of the strains fell upon the earth, not like an anthem or chorus; but as here and there music is heard on a summer night, afar off, snatches being wafted to us, and then being hushed again by intervening noises or

winds, so there seem to have been snatches of this celestial music—the annunciation. These snatches did not constitute the whole song of heavenly joy, but were a part of it.

The shepherds passed away. Nothing more is known of them. Their ministry was to be spectators and annunciators; and having fulfilled their mission they sank out of view. And now for a long time there was no Christ of history. We behold the babe lying in a manger. His being in a manger was not a hardship so very great according to the manners and customs of the lower populations of Palestine. Born under circumstances of great obscurity, he lived in profound solitude. And among the marvels of historic lore is the fact that after his return from Egypt, after he went with his mother to Nazareth, almost nothing more was heard of him for a period of nearly thirty years, except in one single instance. At twelve years of age he appeared at the temple; but besides that, for this whole period, there was hardly a word or syllable heard of him.

To those who think that Christ was but a man this may not seem strange; but to us who hold that he was God manifest in the flesh; to us who hold that he bore divinity from the throne to the footstool, for the illumination of the race, this long eclipse seems, or may seem, strange. It may seem strange that he should pass through those stages of development which belong to men. But if we judge, not by theory but by facts, as they occurred, was it not the purpose of God that he should become a man, not merely standing in man's lot, but through that long process of evolution and self-consecration which belongs to the race; that he should taste childhood and youth and early manhood; that he should go through the various steps of intellectual development which are common to men; that his soul should be opened up by the same method that man's is?

So it is not until many and many years have rolled by; it is not until childhood and early youth are passed, that Christ appears again upon the stage; and then it is as receiving the initiating services and consecrations which should prepare him to be recognized by his countrymen as a legitimate teacher.

This presents us to the third stage of our Saviour's life upon earth, and the beginning of his ministry—his remarkable appearing first in Judea. He seems to have hid himself after baptism for many months—some four or five—which we have no account of; but he was engaged in preaching a large portion of the time during the last years of his life. And his time seems to have been precious. We follow him as he emerges from obscurity, and goes



into Judea, and back to Galilee, where the greatest part of his teaching took place. Almost all his miracles were performed among his own people, in the midst of the mixed population of Galilee. There the people were more largely cosmopolitan than in any other part of the Eastern country. What he was to them, we well know. He was a wonder, a marvel to them. If they had been called upon to interpret precisely their thoughts of him, they would have said, "He is a Rabbi." What was a Rabbi? An eminent Jewish teacher. He was justly held in reverence by them. And as he waxed in power, they began to feel that he was more than a Rabbi—a Prophet.

During all this time he was consorting with his own disciples in private discourse as well as in public ministration. What was he to them? We cannot discern exactly. It is impossible, with the material we have, to analyze the feelings of the disciples. There is no record as to how they felt. They seem to have changed in their feelings. Sometimes they mounted up to an enthusiasm which answered somewhat to our modern idea of fidelity. At other times they seem to have been no better than the common men around about them. They marveled at things which seem familiar to us. They were dull. They were laggards. He was not yet interpreted to them except as an extraordinary Jew upon whom the Spirit of God rested in eminent measure. He was fitted of God to be their teacher and their leader.

After his Galilean ministry was in the main completed, he set his face southward toward Judea and Jerusalem again; and for the last time the records of the Gospel are burdened with the fruitfulness of his teaching. Almost all that lore of the New Testament which respects the divinity of Christ; almost all those spiritual insights which never yet have been interpreted perfectly, and which never can be perfectly interpreted except by conscious experience; all those profounder views of Christ which made him very God, were presented in comparatively the last few days of his ministry, when he was looking upon his passion and drawing near to it. It is in the shadow of the great grief, and on the eve of the great sacrifice, that he poured out the fullness of the inspiration of the New Testament on the subject.

But even then his disciples did not understand him. And when he was seized, and seemed to have no power to defend himself; when they beheld him, like any other mortal, called before the courts, and treated with contumely, they all forsook him and fled. And there was nothing left by which they could hold fast to their integrity but their imagination and their love. But as yet

their love had not been fired by their imagination, nor had their faith been truly developed. Around about the judgment-seat there still lingered the influence of the Mount of Transfiguration. They who beheld Christ in his wondrous glory there, had the impression of his divinity so wrought upon them that not even their senses could dispel it.

Then came the mighty day of darkness. There was the sepulcher, the silence, and the sweet rest. Then came the memorable morning, and the opening of the grave, and the coming forth of the Saviour, and his disclosure to the women, and afterwards, in succession, to different groups. And then there were the few high and strange days in which he appeared to his disciples before his ascension. And then was the matchless beauty of his ascending glory; and he was in heaven.

The disciples tarried. They waited. Their time had not yet come. For, although they had companied with Christ from the first, and had been made familiar with his lessons of instruction, and had strong personal attraction for him, he was not yet born in them. He had been born into life, and had passed through it, and had gone up again to the glory which he had before the world was, with his Father; and yet, to them he had not yet been disclosed except at intervals, with here and there some elements of his interior and true spiritual force. No such Christ had they as after the day of Pentecost burst upon their understanding and upon their experience. For, when the appointed time came, there did descend upon them the bright influence and sweet inspiration of the Holy Ghost. Then they waked up to a thought of Christ which they seem never to have had before. Then there blazed out of their hearts a love for Christ which they had never before manifested. And these men who previously had been timid and hesitant, and had interpreted spiritual things carnally, and, being cowardly, had forsaken Christ—these men were now endowed with a royal courage, and with a glorious fidelity. They set their faces against kings. They went before councils to bear witness, and feared not the wrath of man. They took imprisonments cheerfully. They went everywhere preaching the Gospel, and suffering persecutions. Everywhere they exhibited the intensest faith in Christ Jesus as the Saviour of the world. Everywhere a love that surpassed all other loves filled their souls. Everywhere they became witnesses of God in Christ Jesus, who was the sinner's Friend, the soul's Hope, the Way of life. This was their experience.

Now, as I have intimated, there is a general analogy to this history in the experience of men, and in the steps by which they progress to a true and saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.



I hardly know what Christ is to little children. He hovers upon the rim of their imagination as the stars at evening hover upon the horizon. He awakens in them wondrous thoughts which melt back into their souls almost as fast as they think them. A little child's imagination is a tremulous emotion of the chords of the soul. They vibrate, and cease, and vibrate, and cease, scarcely working themselves up to ideas; or, if they attain to ideas, they never do to memories.

When I look back and think of what I thought of Christ when I was four or five years of age, he seems to have been something bright. I had some idea of him which seems to have been derived from, or to have been a kind of reflection of, my father and my mother: nothing as of myself, and nothing as from above, but a kind of vague feeling that there was somewhere a wondrous Being, with glorious attributes. Christ is, for the most part, hidden from little children. He is a legend, a sweet story, to them. He is a luminous thought. He is a mere suggestion of some vague influence of rare excellence.

But as children grow into young manhood, more and more Christ begins to be taught to them in the form of historic facts and of theological ideas. The Christ of whom we learn in the schools and in the systems of theology is not the Christ who is introduced to us by the Spirit of God afterward.

I know not whether it was owing simply to the accident of my position; but all my early thought of Christ was a thought of him as a historic personage. I framed him myself out of history; and he was to me the Paragon of morality, and the Lesson of practical life. He was the great Model of perfection. And there was something more than this; but that more I could not fathom nor feel, for the most part. For I was taught that sinfulness had shut me out from God.

Now I know that nothing brings God so quick and so near as singing; but the impression which was left on my mind by the teaching that I received then, was, that if I grew up into goodness, at last I could come to that state in which I might see Jesus and be loved by him. As a child is told, "Father and mother will not love you unless you are good," which is a lie, so I was impressed with the thought that if I was good enough God would love me, and if I was not good enough he would not love me. It was as if I should say, at midnight, to the flowers that slept in the field, "O flowers! awake; array yourselves in your beauteous colors; and then you will see the sun." Would not every mute root say, "How shall I live if the sun does not shed its light and warmth upon

me?" As if there could be any life except that which God breathes into the soul!

The Christ of my childhood was the Christ of duty, and the Christ of historic facts. So far as the heavenly Christ was concerned, it was him that I should earn by living right. But it gave me very little comfort to be told that on that blessed day when, with prayers, and strivings, and evolutions of thought and feeling, and changes of conduct, specific and generic, I should rise up to a true manhood, Christ would break upon me in all the beauty and grandeur of his character as the Saviour of my soul. Alas! if there is no Christ for men until they are competent to take care of themselves, what will become of them? Where is the help for human weakness to come from? How is this want that is universal to be supplied? Is there to be no Christ that was born to seek and to save sinning and sinful men in the early conceptions of childhood?

At last, out of these obscure and loose notions of Christ, men begin to have a conception of Christ as a Divine Being: not merely as the Author of right conduct and right dispositions upon earth, but as One who inspires, and then answers in some degree the higher aspirations of the soul, so that it becomes conscious of its own divinity and immortality.

Then come on periods of struggle—such days as the apostles went through in the last few weeks of the life of Christ; days with hope and darkness alternating; days in which men's sense of spiritual need is profound, various, universal; days in which they attempt to supply their spiritual want, and do not invoke the Divine Presence, and so do not by the power of faith in Christ overcome the evil that is in them, and bring every thought into subjection to the mind and will of Christ; days in which Christ is to them an inspiration, but not a victory; days in which Christ is to them the Forerunner, but not a present companion; days in which Christ sits oftentimes as a schoolmaster, and stern and severe at that in the lessons that he gives; days in which Christ sits as the Leader to guide men through rough and thorny paths, but not as a bosom Friend, and as the soul's rest.

At last there comes a Christ such as the apostles knew—Christ after his resurrection, and after the descent of the Holy Ghost, at the Pentecost, when they broke out into a personal experience in which their souls came into an intimate union with their Lord. There is in the experience of Christians a day in which from all these longing and hesitant views, from all these partial and limiting notions of Christ, they come into a personal adhesion to him. They obtain a



view of him as the expression of divine love and mercy. They obtain a sense of the power of God to help them to overcome evil in themselves and in those around about them. They obtain a personal and sympathetic faith in the Lord Jesus Christ by which they can say, "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith of the Son of God." There is a Christ that comes to men's imagination sweeter than music ever came to the ear of the musician, or than poetry ever came to the mind of the poet. There is an experience of men who are truly Christians, such that, when Christ is transfigured to them, he is no longer a Christ of the Book, though primarily he was derived from the Book; he is no longer the Christ of their instruction: he is the Christ that has been born in them, and that supplies their special and personal needs. If we had the power of limning our spiritual states as true Christians, we should give forth, in some feeble form, the Christ that seems to us most joyful, most beautiful, most divine; the Christ that dwells with us in darkness; the Christ that triumphs with us in light; the Christ with whom we weep; the Christ who bends over us to forgive; the Christ who in the midst of our vulgar earthly enjoyments is inspiring evermore holy aspirations and desires and longings; the Christ who helps our weakness; the Christ who sets our dislocated joints so that our feet shall walk, yea, run, in the royal way; the Christ who begins to come home to us so that he abides in our thoughts and imaginations, and is with us in our prayer and converse.

If men should consort with Christ, how would the Christ of every one of them have much of that one's own thoughts and features and personality! How would there be in every one a common element of joy and hope and victory! How would there be a feeling of victory derived largely from the personality of one who had thus had Christ formed in him, taking something of the mold of one's own self; bearing, as we may hope, something of ourselves in such a way that when we rise to glory we shall recognize Christ by seeing in him something that is in us, so that our identity and his identity shall be the same.

To many this thought of Christ comes early. To many it comes almost in the beginning. To many, let us hope, who are happily organized or happily taught, it comes with the first dawning of the understanding. Alas! that so much of our life should be spent in getting rid of misteaching; in untwisting bad habits; in throwing out formations that had better not have been allowed to come in at all.

How blessed are they who, not educated in scholastic distinctions, are from the morning of their life taught to hold on to Christ

as their dearest, sweetest Friend and Head, so that they grow up into him in all things! Blessed and fortunate are they. The angels sing to such.

But many come to this thought of God in Christ Jesus, later, not because they do not arrive at a state of susceptibility to spiritual impressions until later years, but because they come to it through very many struggles. There are many sins to be laid aside. There are many evil habits to be overcome. There are many forward dispositions to be transformed. There is to be the subduing of the will by the Divine Spirit. There is to be the effectual ministration of providence. There is to be brought to bear the mellowing influence of sorrow, the humbling influence of misfortunes, and the influence which comes from breaking away from idolatrous affections, and cleaving to those things which draw the soul Godward. The church; its meetings; its ordinances; the winds that blow; the clouds that float in the heavens; the music that cheers the heart; objects of beauty that please the eye—all these things are appointed of God as instruments and influences to raise the human soul toward the divine. The affections of the household, all right processes of social life, are God's ordinances. The ordinances of the sanctuary are not more sacred or more effectual than those providences of God in nature and society by which he is perpetually instructing and molding and preparing men's minds for the indwelling of the Holy Ghost.

I profoundly believe that by the varied influences of the Spirit of God, through instructions and inspirations, and experiences and providences, one is at last brought into a state in which he can open his soul and see Christ as a Being of love and mercy, and that Christ consciously does enter into their thought, and form a sweet partnership with them. Men look with unbelieving eyes upon any such possibility; but is there not an hour in which two noble souls that have been coming up side by side through life find their feelings changed toward each other? Is there not an hour in which, by some strange providence one word unlocks them each to the other, and again locks them each *in* the other? Is there not a look that is a revelation? Is there not a silence that is an inspiration? And from that hour and moment do not their lives inspire each other all the way onward to the gate of heaven? And is it strange that there should be an hour in which the greater friendship and the greater love of God should be disclosed to us? If we are sons of God; if we are away from home, and at school; if we are being prepared for the glorious vacation of death; and the glorious upmounting through it to our Father's house in heaven, is it



strange that there comes an hour in which God meets the soul, and the soul recognizes its Saviour, and rejoices in him? Is it strange, when we see the analogies and parallels of this experience among men, that we recognize with inexpressible delight the greater power and grandeur and nobleness of divine love?

At last, when men come to this Saviour that is personal to them, they come to the condition which the apostles were in after the Pentecost. It is no longer the Christ of the New Testament—that is, of the letter; it is no longer the Christ of the Catechism; it is no longer the Christ of men's conversation; it is the Christ of our own souls; it is the Christ of our own experiences; it is that which we feel to be our need supplied by our God.

Blessed are they of whom it may be said, "Their Christ at last is born, and is formed in them." Blessed are you when men, addressing you, can say, "To you a Saviour is born this day." For men have traveled their two score years, yea their three score years, often, before the Spirit of Christ to their knowledge is really born in them, or is being born in them, the hope of glory.

Now let me ask you, have you ever been made to feel the need of a divine Saviour? Have your aspirations been so low that nature could do for you all that you wanted? Has your sense of character been so limited that you have felt no need of supernatural help? Has there been no immortality beckoning you from the fair horizon? Or, have all your hopes been within the bounds of the horizon? Is Christ to you anything but a great and disagreeable duty whom you ought to know, and whom you ought to serve? Have you any life, any hope, any cheer in him? You bear his name, Christian brethren, to what purpose? What is he to you? Are you merely followers of morality? Are you merely ethical disciples? Are you simply versed in theological questions? Or, are you really a believer in Christ's divinity? Are you a sincere follower of him? Are you willing to die for him? Are you willing to live for him? Is Christ to you a personal Friend? Is he a forgiving Saviour? Is he One from whom you receive an inspiration that lifts you above the flesh and above the world into true and spiritual commerce with invisible things and the invisible world? Is he One who makes you feel that you are a son of God, and an heir of eternal glory? Have you had that experience which quenches doubt? Have you had that experience which burns up infidelity in the soul? Has Christ been with you? Has God shaken your soul with divine fervor and divine power? Or, are you simply on the way toward your Christ? Are you yet struggling with thoughts and feelings?

There is for every one a Christ that shall bring peace. There is a Christ of love that brings rest. There is a Christ that brings victory to the soul. How rich are they who can look upon riches, and say, "I am richer than they are"! How joyful are they who can look upon joys, and say, "My joys are a whole octave higher than those"! How blessed are they who can look upon misfortunes, and say, "I am set free from your power"! How blessed are they who can say to everything in this world, "I am glad to have you go with me as far as you can help me upward; but further than that I can get along without you! I have food, and raiment, and inspiration, and joy unspeakable and full of glory. and these are enough to carry me through"!

Is the Christ that I have described the Christ of your household? Is this the Christ whom your children see that you love? Are there not those present who have been taught that religion was gloomy and sad-faced? Are there not those here who have hoped yet one day to be religious, because they thought it was hard to die without insurance? Are there not those who, rather than die and run a risk, are willing to be religious? Are there not those who look upon Christ's service as literally a yoke and a burden, forgetting that Christ has declared that his yoke is easy, and that his burden is light? Are there not those who have no sense of the glorified Christ? Is your Christ dead in the letter and buried in the Scripture? I call to you, and say, There is a love of God, expressed by the Lord Jesus Christ, that waits for you, to help your growth, and give inspiration to all that is noble in you, that it may dominate, and perfectly conquer all that which is carnal and base. The nobler purposes of this life will be better accomplished through the help of God than through any other help; and there is a Christ that waits at the door of every soul, and knocks, saying, "I knock; open unto me." You do not have to go far to find sweet experiences. Beyond and above earthly things is a love which brings rest and peace—peace in life, and peace in death; and it brings joy and victory in heaven.

Remember your father's God, remember your mother's God, remember the God of the Christian, ye wanderers; ye that are unsettled from your faith; ye that are reaping handfuls and not bosomfuls of joy from natural fields, and are going further and further away from a personal reliance upon God in Christ Jesus. Remember, I beseech of you, all those early scenes and early hours and early associations which so tended to bring you back to your father's God and to the hope of your childhood.

Are there not those who have almost given up their Bible?



Are there not many to whom every street in the city is more familiar than the ways of this old Book, this old Eden, where grow every tree, and every fruit, and every flower of sweet and pure delight? Have you forsaken your father's counsel? Have you forgotten your mother's comfort? I call upon those who have long been seeking to turn again to this old Book, to ask God who inspired that to inspire them, that they may understand its sacred truths, and that, catching from the letter the outlines of these truths, they may become alive inwardly; and that Christ may come to them, not interpreted through the mere text, but interpreted through the Spirit of God. And may that Divine Spirit which has never forsaken the earthly church of God, that Spirit which still keeps the truth alive in the earth, draw near to every one of you.

If there be those among you who have sought Christ; who through fear or remorse have called upon him, or through trust and love have leaned upon him; or if there be those who have rejected Christ, and would have none of him, I ask not that you take the dogmas of the Church; I ask not that you subscribe to any particular form of belief or confession of faith; but I beseech of you to help yourselves by taking hold of that manifestation of God in Christ Jesus which you need to cleanse you, and strengthen you, and inspire you, and save you.

For, when at last the hour shall come—as certainly it will to us all—in which that least obvious but greatest of conquerors, Death, draws near to us, then all those things for which we have spent our lives will be powerless. In the hour of death our money will be forgotten. Pain will quench avarice. All honors and all pleasures will fly away, and will scarcely abide as the figments of an evanishing memory. In that hour of departing, when heart and flesh fail, then it is that that which to men is like an imagination, that that invisible, impalpable hope which the hand cannot handle nor the eye see, but which dwells as a spirit in the soul, begins, as all other things grow weak, to gather to itself omnipotent power. And as no thing on earth can carry you one single step into the darkness, nor bridge for you the mighty abyss, this is that power which, as it were, throws the brightest rainbow of life across this world to the other, and on which your footsteps are planted; and you rise from glory to glory, until you stand in Zion and before God, and are children of blessedness.

I call upon you, then, on this Sabbath day, to review your thought of Christ, and to review your condition in reference to him. Accept this blessed Saviour as your inward life, your

strength, your joy. Live with him. Live in him. Let him live in you. Die by his power, and rise by his power, and be with him forever in glory.

And when that day shall come which cannot be long kept from any of us, may I see you in heaven. May you behold me there. And may these imperfect friendships, and this staggering walk of life be so gloriously transformed that then we shall behold each other ripened in beauty and in perfect symmetry, where every tone shall be as a note of music, and every joy shall have for its expression the highest anthems of the blessed.

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### PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

We draw near to thee, our Father, to thank thee for the mercies we have received through Jesus Christ our Lord—for the redemption of his blood; for the inspiration of his word; for the example of his life; for all the revelation of thyself which he hath brought forth, living, or dying, or living again. If we have knowledge of thee so that thou art near and dear to us, we have received that knowledge through Jesus, who hath taught us what divine life is, and from whom we have learned what is divine mercy and pity. We have beheld his life, and known that it interpreted thine. His heart hath taught us, better than words, what is the divine heart. And now we come unto God through him. We behold God in him. We rejoice in him as our Saviour. Standing for the incomprehensible and the invisible, and bringing near to us the things which were too high for our reach, we rejoice in him, and live by faith of him. Through the love of Christ we purify our souls. Dying we trust in him; and we hope through his power to rise again at the last day, and hope by him to be presented at the throne of his Father without blemish or spot.

And now, O God, what thanks shall we give to thee for thy remembrance of us, and for that sweet influence which is reached down to us from heaven day by day; for all the comfort which thou hast promised and hast sent; for the consolation which thou hast ministered unto us through this long year, and through the many weary years of life during which thou hast been faithful to us? Thy words have been Yea and Amen. They have borne our weight when we have leaned upon them. They have been a staff that did not break. Thou hast been our way, and we have walked therein. And it has been an ascending road, growing brighter and brighter, as leading toward the perfect day.

And now, we desire to carry our hearts' affections to thee. We desire to love thee more perfectly. We desire that thy love may work in us all purity and nobility. We desire to follow thee, and, loving thee, to walk in thy Spirit. We desire to practice the lesson of self-denial which thou hast taught us. We rejoice when joy is the gift of God, and when its light cheers and comforts. We desire to take all that is within us of reason, of taste, of affection, our whole moral being, and to consecrate it to thy service and to the welfare of men. Accept our consecration. Teach us from day to day how more perfectly to find thee. Be thou, O Lord, in us, and dwell in us until every faculty, every thought, every germ of thought, every part of



our nature, shall be sanctified, so that Christ shall be formed in us; so that Jesus shall be born in us the hope of glory. And we pray, O Lord our God, that thou wilt make the knowledge of his blessed name more and more sweet to the ears of those who do not now know him.

Grant, if there be any who are burdened with a sense of their infirmity and of their sinfulness, that they may behold in Jesus the Pardoner—the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. If there be those who are walking in darkness and without light, arise upon their vision, O thou Prince of Salvation, and lead them in the royal way. If there be any who have gone away from their first love, who have long ago ceased to have the experience of faith and the blessedness of joy in Christ, restore them, thou Shepherd. Bring them again into the fold, and into the sweet experience of thy love.

We pray that thou wilt bless, to-night, those who are gathered together here. May all the sacred associations of this hour be full of blessedness to every one of our souls. Comfort those who need consolation. Cheer those who are in darkness. Encourage those who are desponding. Forgive those who are filled with sorrow for their sins. Succor those whose remorse drives them toward the night, and who are in despair. O Lord, be thou a Saviour; and to-night, in the midst of this congregation, manifest thy power of saving men from all evil in thought or in feeling, and of inspiring in them every noble thought, and every worthy desire, and every upward aim, and every purpose which thou dost approve.

We pray that thou wilt grant thy blessing to rest upon the aged, who have well nigh fulfilled thy will, and who pause a little before they go hence to be no more on earth. Wilt thou prepare them, like thy servant of old, to say, from day to day, "Now, Lord, let thy servant depart in peace."

Draw near to those who are bearing the heat and burden of the day. May they see how better to fulfill the law of love in their affairs; how to discharge all their duties in the true spirit of Christ. And we pray that as their day is, their strength may be also.

Grant that the young may grow up in truth and purity and fidelity. May they become of a stature surpassing that of their fathers. May they more and more be filled with the spirit of Christ.

We pray that thou wilt grant thy blessing to rest on all the churches of every name. Be with all thy servants who are making known the truth as it is in Jesus. Grant, we pray thee, that evil and error may be purged away; that men may see the brotherhood that is in man more and more perfectly, and that growing sympathy may draw together those who have been widely separated. We pray that thy people may become one in sympathy. May all those who love thee love one another, and have the unity of the Spirit. May thy kingdom come in all the earth, and thy will be done throughout the world, as it is in heaven.

And to the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, shall be the praise, forever more. *Amen.*

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## PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

Our Father, we thank thee for all that thou hast thought and done for our sinful race. We cannot probe nor understand the mysteries of Christ, nor of human life, nor of providence. We only know our need. We are as children cast out upon the midnight ocean, who know neither the depths, nor the winds, nor the storms; but who know that they are out on the perilous sea. And we cry out. Tempest-tossed and not comforted, at times

all that is in us cries out for God. We eat, and are hungry again. We drink, and are thirsty again. We laugh, and then forget to laugh. Sadness is around about us and within us, and alternates until thou, O blessed Saviour, dost take up thine abode in the soul. Those who have thee for a constant guest have joy and peace forever.

Now, we pray thee, draw near to all those who need thee. Teach those who, needing thee, do not know it. Grant, we beseech of thee, that those who are searching for thee may find thee. Help them. Speak comfortably to them. May they not wait till they have something to bring to Christ besides their wretchedness and their unhappiness. May they go to him as they would go to their physician for the healing of their body. We beseech of thee that there may be many who shall break through their sins, and remove the distance which intervenes between them and Christ. May there be some who to-night shall go out into the light and liberty of the sons of God, and whose hearts from this time forth shall be able to cry out, Abba, Father.

Be with us while we live. Mark out for us the path which we are to walk. Give us willing feet and submissive hearts when the time shall come that heaven wants us, and sends for us. And may we not misunderstand death nor its beckonings, but rejoice in it as the messenger of God come to call us home—for we are homesick. And grant, at last, that as children brought home, O Father, we may see thee as thou art, and be like unto thee.

And to thy name shall be all the praise and the glory, forever and ever.  
*Amen.*



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